

Southern Region Headquarters - undergoing change

AFP members working in Southern Region investigate offences against the Commonwealth in Victoria, the nation's second most populous State and in Tasmania, the State with the nation's smallest population.

The Regional Headquarters is located in Melbourne's 'legal district', within easy reach of the Melbourne Magistrates, Federal, County and Supreme Courts and is also close to the public transport system.

Other agencies with which Southern Region works closely are for the most part also within easy reach.

The AFP occupied the building, known as the Royal Mint Centre over the Christmas-New Year period of 1987-88.

The new RHQ provides a vastly improved working environment.

The building has proved flexible enough to enable ongoing improvements and revision of its layout to make working conditions as close to the ideal as possible. However, the dynamic nature of the AFP is now testing the layout to the limits and planning has commenced on some major changes to take place over the next few years.

Growing population

Four million people live in Victoria and at a recent International Festival of Nations, organisers claimed that Victoria's population is representative of more than 100 nations.

On current statistics, there are more Greek and former Greek nationals living in Melbourne than in any other city in their former homeland, apart from Athens, and in recent times Melbourne has also become a popular destination for Vietnamese immigrants.

Accordingly, Southern Region members and staff members need to be aware of the culture and customs of people from many parts of the world.

The changing mix of the commu-



Melbourne landmark - a 'W' Class tram passes in front of the AFP Southern Region headquarters building in LaTrobe Street.

nity is well reflected in Southern Region's personnel, providing a decided advantage to the AFP in its investigational activities.

Big team

Southern Region employs about 350 police members and 50 staff members and has three branches based outside the headquarters building: Portswatch (Melbourne Airport), Geelong Station and Tasmania Branch in Hobart.

Portswatch maintains a close liaison with the Australian Customs Service (ACS) at Melbourne Airport. The Branch initiates alerts and stands ready to respond quickly to any incident or event demanding AFP attention.

The AFP unit situated in Geelong, Australia's 11th largest city, is small but highly efficient. Detectives from Geelong conduct their inquiries predominantly in the State's western region, taking in sizeable country towns such as Warrnambool, Portland, Colac, Horsham and Hamilton.

Tasmania Branch

Tasmania Branch headquarters is housed in the fully refurbished, self-contained former Defence Recruiting Building in Liverpool Street, Hobart.

The office is close to the Magistrates Court and Tasmania Police Headquarters and staffed by one superintendent, two sergeants, seven constables and three staff members. The work centres on drugs, and fraud and general crime, with some emphasis on intelligence gathering.

The Branch has just welcomed Superintendent Dusty Miller, who took over from Superintendent Floyd Ballard following Superintendent Ballard's transfer to Canberra.

The small, hard-working and dedicated team maintains a busy schedule, having responsibility for Commonwealth law enforcement amid the most decentralised population base in Australia.

Tasmania has an area of approximately 68,000km² and a

The world's most liveable city



population of 460,000; with the majority living in four major population centres.

Federal Policing in the 'Apple Isle' means covering many kilometres, liaising with other government departments and outside agencies and requires a diversity of skills.

The AFP in Tasmania has developed a strong bond with the Australian Customs Service and many joint projects are undertaken using common intelligence and facilities.

During a posting to Tasmania, members can expect the routine, the unusual and sometimes the bizarre. For example, during early 1992, Branch members dealt with Antarctic stowaways and the siege of a log train by a number of 'Ned Kelly' look-alikes, complete with tin helmets and horizontal viewing slots.

Staff movements through the Branch are infrequent. Despite this, two of the younger members are only in their early twenties.

Southern Region headquarters services the Tasmania Branch's specialist needs such as document examination, fingerprints, forensic and photography. Additional police support is given by RHQ as the need arises.

The Branch is undergoing constant upgrading and is equipped with current computers and technical equipment to maintain modern policing standards.

Technological advances

Assisting the AFP to maintain its status as the Commonwealth's primary law enforcement agency, Southern Region's Computer Services Unit is installing more than 100 new Local Area Network (LAN) computers.

Sergeant Dave Costello heads a small team which has the task of installing and maintaining the new work stations.

The Region will soon have an average of more than one terminal for every four members.

As the LAN and its software is something new to the majority of police and staff members, three computer training staff are kept busy familiarising the Region's personnel with the new equipment and the programs with which they will be working.

WITH a population of three million, Melbourne is Australia's second largest city. Recently named 'The World's Most Liveable City' by Washington-based research group, Population Crisis Committee, Melbourne was ranked ahead of 100 other international cities based on an investigation into the effect of rapid growth on cities and living standards. Judging was based on 10 indicators which included: the number of murders, air pollution, traffic speed at rush hour, income spent on food, people per room, the percentage of houses with water and electricity and the number of telephones.

Melbourne's climate can deliver four seasons in any one day, but with an annual average rainfall of 655mm, Melbourne receives only half the annual average for Sydney.

The city features striking contrasts in architecture from intricate facades dating back to the turn of the century and before, to some outstanding examples of modern high-rise buildings featuring state-of-the-art integrated systems and technology.

A planned city, Melbourne's central business district and the area which surrounds it for about 5km to the north, south and east is really quite magnificent with wide, boulevards lined with elm and plane trees.

The city is notable for its tram system, recognised as an efficient, non-polluting people mover.

Many of the nation's largest companies are based in Melbourne, a city which also has the distinction of being home to some of the

country's best restaurants.

The city is also home to two magnificent sports stadiums.

The Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) is the nation's biggest stadium, able to accommodate more than 100,000 people, with seating provided for more than 80,000.

The MCG is host to the Australian Football League Grand Final which attracts a sell-out crowd. Many of the season's inter-club AFL matches often draw crowds of up to 80,000.

The ground, which staged the track and field events for the 1956 Olympics is, first and foremost, a cricket ground and it has been the setting for many significant performances by the world's best Test cricketers and venue for numerous battles for the Ashes.

The National Tennis Centre, about 1.5km from the city centre, hosts the Australian Tennis Open. It is one of only four venues world-wide to conduct a 'grand slam' event and is recognised as the most modern and one of the best along side the other Grand Slam venues: Wimbledon, Rolan Garos and Flushing Meadows.

Some may think of the Southern States as 'small'. In terms of land area and distances Victoria and Tasmania are the smallest States in the Commonwealth; nevertheless, the distance from Melbourne to Mildura is equivalent to Melbourne to Canberra, while Hobart to Launceston approximates the distance between Melbourne and Albury.

Not far from the city are many scenic drives and the winter snowfields can be reached in just over two hours.